

# Information Handout

Professional Version | US English

# Schema Metaphors



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## Description

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Cognitive therapy addresses cognition at three levels: automatic thoughts, conditional assumptions, and core beliefs (schemas). Metaphors are a helpful way for clients to understand what schemas are and how they often operate to maintain a status-quo. *Schema Metaphors* is an illustrated series of metaphors to aid understanding of what schemas are and how they shape our perceptions.

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## Instructions

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This is a Psychology Tools information handout.

Suggested uses include:

- Client handout – a psychoeducation resource.
- Discussion point – to provoke a discussion and explore your client's beliefs.
- Therapist learning tool – to improve your familiarity with a psychological construct.
- Supervision tool – to develop formulations and knowledge.
- Teaching resource – a learning tool during training.

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## References

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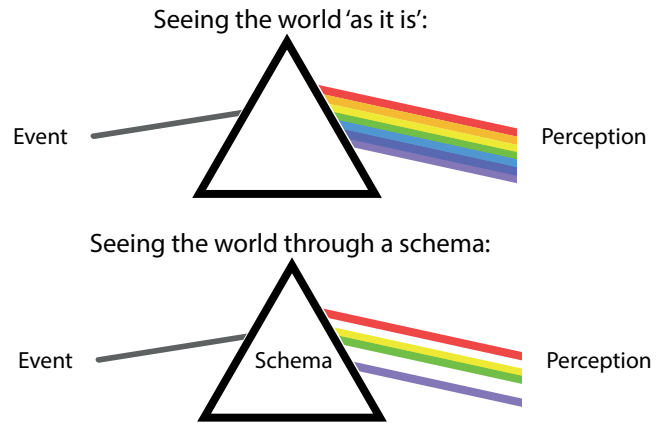
Butler, G., Fennell, M., Hackmann, A. (2008). *Cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety disorders*. New York: Guilford.

Padesky, C. (1991). Schema as self-prejudice. *International Cognitive Therapy Newsletter*, 6, 6-7.

# Schema Metaphors

Schemas shape the way we see the world. They work to maintain themselves. There are different helpful metaphors for thinking about how schemas work.

**Schemas are like lenses or prisms which only show you a certain view of the world.**

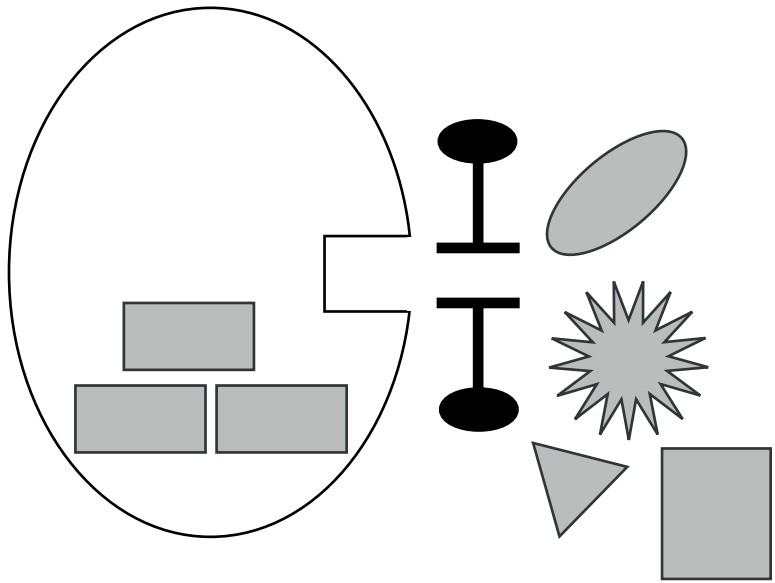


**Schemas are like a magnet which attracts some bits of evidence and repels others.**

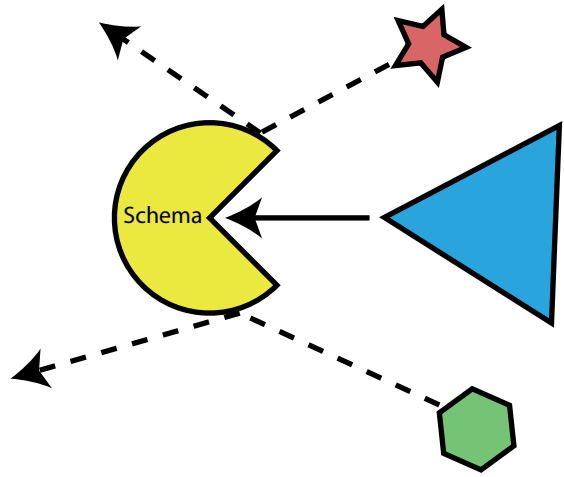


- ← I failed my exams when I was 15.
- ← I'm dyslexic and my teacher at school said I'd never amount to anything.
- ← I lost my temper and shouted at my children.
- I have successfully run my own business for 23 years.
- I won the pub quiz with my friends.
- my hobby is photography and I have exhibited pictures in a national event.

**Schemas are like a 'Mental Crusher' that only allows information consistent with the schema to enter the 'head'. Information that is not consistent with the schema will be ignored, forgotten, or crushed into a form which does fit.**



**Schemas are prejudices. They are like a shape with a 'cut out', and only pay attention to other shapes which 'fit'.**



'Mental Crusher' adapted from: Butler, Fennell & Hackmann (2008). *Cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety disorders*. New York: Guilford Press

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## Resource details

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